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Though removed by two and a half millenniums from the Israel of Isaiah's day, our attitudes and rebellions are tragically similar.

By Wilber Alexander

Strange Estrangement

*"The ox knows its owner,
and the ass its master's crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people does not understand"*
(Isa. 1:3, R.S.V.).

THIS portion of a soul-probing Hebrew poem reveals a startling and incisive commentary on a people's strange estrangement from God. In utter frankness it sets forth the tragic insensibility of a people steeped in sin.

Any person with a sensitive mind who studies these words and those that follow will discover some reasons for his own separation, his own peculiar moments of apostasy from God. At the same time, one with a sensitive heart who reads the entire first chapter of Isaiah will not miss the message that brings help and hope in the hour when his relationship to God seems most strained.

When the cause of evil seems to prosper, when there is evidence on all sides of open sin, of scoffing at the law of God, it is not difficult to preach the anger of a righteous God and His certain judgment upon those who are in rebellion. We would expect to find Isaiah uttering warnings and scathing rebukes as he begins his oracle on the desperate condition of Israel. But before he speaks about divine anger and judgment, he pleads with his people to consider the agony, the sorrowful cry, the yearning of a father for the sons he is losing because of their unbelieving, uncaring hearts.

Lovingly but sternly God speaks. First He calls on heaven and earth to witness His words. In this setting it might be possible to impress the dull senses of His people with the extent of their condition. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. 1:2, 3).

God calls His people children—but children whose lives, blessings, and

greatness bestowed by the Father are being used irresponsibly, squandered as though He did not exist. In verse 3 God compares men to the most stupid of beasts to illustrate their insensibility to the true relationship they have to God and He to them. He says, in effect—even animals feel an attachment for the one who takes care of them, but in your rebellion you do not even recognize Me.

At this point Isaiah offers Israel tangible evidence of how far they have removed themselves from God. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel." "How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Every one loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not

come to them" (Isa. 1:4, 21-23, R.S.V.).

Notice the words Isaiah uses to describe their condition—*laden with iniquity, corrupt, forsaken the Lord, despised the Holy One, harlot, murderers, dross, bribes, injustice, inhumanity, desertion, insult!* He sums up their condition with the phrase at the end of verse 4, "They are utterly estranged."

The next verses set forth the conditions that prevail in their strange estrangement. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:5-9).

This is the end result of a nation's rebellion. Isaiah does not gloat over his people's dire situation, but he sees it as unnecessary and absurd. Israel has watched her enemies wade through the blood of loved ones, leaving a trail of destruction and death. The land is still smoldering; the cries of those mourning their dead are yet heard. They are defeated and in the throes of death. Still they are rebelling and limping on down the road away from God.

An Appeal

Isaiah asks, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there

The Basin

By FLOYD A. KRAUSE

He called for a basin in which to wash his hands;

He hoped to rid himself of this strange, silent Galilean,

To secure his position in Caesar's eyes,

To still the wild clamor of the mob;

So he stood with hands held high, glistening, dripping,

And cried, "I am innocent of this just person: see ye to it."

But water never cleanses hands stained with blood,

Never was a guilt-laden soul purged in that mild manner;

Empty gesture of a desperate man, changing nothing.

It only set the guilt indelibly on his soul,

And marked him for eternity as the one

Who sent the spotless Son of God to Golgotha's bloody tree.

is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (verses 5, 6).

Israel, already you have been wounded again and again—there is really no place on you to lay another stripe, but still you rebel. Why? How much will it take to convince you that you are only reaping what you have sown?

Even stranger to Isaiah, and more so to God, is the worship Israel offers. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (verses 10-15).

On any Sabbath day, high day, or feast day crowds still thronged the Temple courts. The sounds of cattle, sheep, and doves filled the air already heavy with incense and the smoke of burnt offerings. All around hands were lifted in prayer. Careful attention was paid to liturgical detail beautiful in form. The setting and activity were most impressive.

Through the prophet God says to this congregation: You rulers of Sodom, you people of Gomorrah, you Temple traders, why do you continue to worship?

The prophet, a man of righteousness, faith, and consecration, in great earnestness and boldness speaks God's words: Look at the blood on the hands you lift up to heaven. Look at the lust and greed in the eyes around you and in your own eyes. Your ears are closed to the pleas of little children and brokenhearted women. How can you pray? How can you look heavenward? How can you hear God? Yet you come. Why?

Wickedness and worship have nothing in common. Later Isaiah points out that they came partly to bribe God—hoping He would restore their losses. They came partly to appease God so the future might not be so dreadful. They came because others

came, and the habit pattern was set.

While their dress still shone brilliantly and their watered wine still contained color, they came to trample the courts of God, hoping their nakedness of soul would not show.

God could not be consistent with His character and allow them to go on and on in stubborn, willful ignorance. They must know their true condition. They must know the ultimate end of their rebellion. All this He tells them through the prophet, and then, instead of passing sentence upon them and leaving them in their misery, rejected and hopeless, He offers them pardon and redemption.

Verses 16-20 summarize the alternatives in their personal salvation.

The Art of Living..... **when**



A Macabre "Joke"

I WAS terribly shocked by a recent incident. When you live with the constant threat of global annihilation, with political treachery, with perpetual crime, you think you're finally shock-proof, but then something happens in your own little world that is so brutal, so nakedly evil, you feel as though you're staring directly into a pit of writhing serpents.

This was the incident. A friend of mine was away from home for the day, having left a reliable baby-sitter with her small children. A telephone call, which the sitter took, gave the message that my friend's father had died suddenly as the result of a heart attack. No further details were given. The sitter frantically tried to reach my friend and finally succeeded, while the little children sobbed, already missing "Grandpop."

Since my friend's father lives in another State, and since his is a traveling job, several frantic hours were spent trying to trace the telephone call, trying to make traveling arrangements, trying to put aside grief. It was assumed that the sitter had failed to get all the necessary information; but as the hours wore on it became apparent that something must be wrong. It was—*very* wrong. In fact, the whole thing was nothing more than a cruel, horrible, macabre "joke."

My friend was in a state of near collapse when her father finally was reached. Could her tormentors have known that last year she lost her mother, her aunt, and her father-in-law, all within the space of a few weeks? Would it have made any difference if they *had* known? I'm wondering, because when the police, called to the house by the outraged husband, were told the story, they shook their heads sadly, and one remarked, "We've been having a real epidemic of this sort of

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 1:16-20). God invites Israel to meet with Him in frank and open discussion about their condition. It is to their advantage to forsake sin and

you're young

by Miriam Hood

thing by teen-agers. They apparently pick names at random out of the telephone book. Sometimes it doesn't work, but occasionally they get hold of someone like this."

My friend could hardly believe that such wanton, senseless, meaningless cruelty was actually considered entertaining by some young people.

"Oh, yes, you'd really be surprised," the police sergeant continued. "Young people used to use the telephone for pranks, some of them quite annoying, some just silly—but this is something else again. And the worst of it is, we're unable to do much about it."

I'd find it difficult to believe that any Adventist young person would so far forget his standards, his "do unto others" training, as to be involved in anything remotely resembling this kind of degenerate conduct. Even if, by some wild, impossible stretch of the imagination, you get a measure of amusement from this sort of thing, you can't possibly know all the circumstances surrounding your victim, nor the effect the "joke" may have on him. You can't know what physical and emotional strains this person is under. Are you going to be the one to push him over the brink? You *are* your brother's keeper, you know! If you're sometimes a part of "practical" jokes, which aren't jokes at all, but which cause heartache or inconvenience or discomfiture to someone else, will you resolve *never* to be involved again?



EWING GALLOWAY

Strange it is that some still remain within the shadows of the church, observing formal requirements, offering ceremonial compliments to God, but at the same time compromising and even openly violating the solemn commands of God's law—professing one thing, living another.

walk in righteousness. The choice is theirs.

Isaiah concludes: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed" (verses 27, 28).

As we look in on the Temple service of the eighth century B.C. we can easily condemn these saints of another age. We can agree with God and His prophet, Isaiah, in their heartbroken accusations against Israel. We can even see the stupidity of Israel's ways and worship. Yet, oddly enough, we seldom are able to sense varying degrees of the estrangement that too often characterizes our own lives.

Estrangement from God is strange!

Strange It Is . . .

Strange it is that we possess so much revelation and information about God and yet do not know or understand Him better, particularly to know how He looks upon the sin that comes between us.

Strange is the long-established fact that God wants to save us from any final estrangement and will do everything possible but force our will.

Strange it is that the experience of others with sin has taught us only that experience is an unprofitable teacher. All the accumulated hurt and heartache of the centuries have taught man very little, for he goes stumbling on into sin deeper and deeper year by year.

Strange it is that at times we can live shut up within ourselves, doing exactly as we please, as though there were no God.

Strange is the independent, careless attitude of some toward their relationship with God. Lack of concern is the great drawback to spiritual growth. Strange it is that God should call us sons and beckon us to repentance and salvation.

Strange is the attempt of some to serve two masters, to walk the broad way and the narrow way at the same time.

Strange is the hierarchy of values that causes men today to burn themselves out to gain this sinful world while they separate their souls from God.

Strange it is that some still remain within the shadows of the church, observing formal requirements, offering ceremonial compliments to God, but at the same time compromising and even openly violating the solemn commands of God's law—professing one thing, living another.

Strange it is that estrangement today seems to be more an indifference than open hostility.

Strange it is how easily man is self-deluded so that he refuses to see his true condition.

Strange it is that in a sense an estranged person eventually destroys himself. Man determines his own destiny by accepting or refusing salvation.

Strange it is that religion is so reasonable yet raises so many doubts in men's minds. All the reason in the world indicates that we should do as God would have us do.

In our estrangement God continues to call us His own. He continues to show us the status of our lives, the foolishness and unreasonableness of our rebellion. He holds out to us the

great alternatives of life and death and appeals to us to accept life.

In the face of this, if we separate ourselves either momentarily, gradually, or abruptly, we are rebels without a cause and ours is a strange estrangement.

Loma Linda University and Overseas Heart Surgery

(Continued from page 1)

an impressive sequel to the story of two other Karachi residents who were helped by the United States. One of these is the now-famous Bashir, the camel-cart driver. The second is a story previously reported in the REVIEW, that of four-year-old Afshan Zafar. It was her case that triggered the entire project. Flown to the United States upon the authorization of Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson, she went to Loma Linda University's White Memorial Hospital. There Drs. M. Morton Woolley and Ellsworth E. Wareham used their God-given skills to save Afshan from a short life of semi-invalidism.

The miraculous story of Afshan swept the city and the nation. The Seventh-day Adventist hospital and the United States Embassy in Karachi were swamped with requests from parents whose children had similar defects. Drs. Arthur Weaver and R. I. McFadden began to look for a way to give hope to other parents.

When queried on the subject, the university heart team in California expressed an enthusiastic willingness to go to Pakistan, and listed their needs to make the venture feasible. Supplies and equipment alone came to 2,000 pounds, and they would need six people from the United States as well as a host of mission workers. The six from the university were Drs. Ellsworth E. Wareham, chief surgeon; C. Joan Coggin, cardiologist; F. Lynn Artress, anesthesiologist; Wilfred M. Huse, assistant surgeon; Mrs. Lavaun Ward Sutton, open-heart nursing specialist; and Lester Gibson, heart-lung machine technician. Later the university decided to send Jerry Wiley to report on the mission, and to assist in administrative details.

After months of negotiations with the United States Government, the Government of Pakistan, and a host of other organizations, Vice-President Johnson's office once again arranged for transportation to help the people of Pakistan.

Where does the story begin? The father of Afshan, Z. A. K. Zafar, feels that "in my case it began with a magazine, the *Signs of the Times*." In a